

Poems written as a member of the Wharfedale Poets – 2012-2014

Ash Wednesday
Srebrenica 2012
Cyprus 1959
May You
Man of Kent
Plane Song

Ash Wednesday

No cross on my forehead
Reminds me of death
But a February night
A city fighting for breath
Burnt to ashes and ashes
To celebrate Lent
Fire-bombed to destruction.
Repent, o repent
You mongers of war
Spell out Dresden in ash,
Remember evermore.

Srebrenica 2012

New shops and children
life goes on.
Shells of houses, monuments.
Before the gentle climb to the village
The startling white
Of memorial posts -
Eight thousand and more
Each one to mark a murder.
Slabs of stones – too many -
Indented with their grim directory.
Columns of family names
Chill to the stark-white bone.
Abundant forest surrounds, the birds are silent.
“May grievance become hope
May revenge become justice
May mothers’ tears become prayers
That Srebrenica
Never happens again.”
Not to anyone – not anywhere.
The washroom taps are jammed,
The tears still flow.

Cyprus, 1959

Small boy
where he shouldn't be
drawn to the fishing boats
and baskets of slivering silver.
Curious enough to risk the plank walk
Unsteadily.
A splash, a swallowing of salty water.
Saved from the crushing hull and harbour wall
By a saviour's vigilance.
Soaked and spluttering,
Epharisto his one Greek word
Amongst the fussing.
Time to dry off, and excuses to be made
For the maternal inquisition
But never a thought of what this moment meant...
'til, five decades on
These words are written now
Not, then, sad airmail letters home.

May You

May you love and be loved
May you find happiness in proportion to the happiness you give others
May your world be one of peace through disdaining conflict
May you learn from what you suffer that you can diminish the suffering of all you encounter
May your world be one of kindnesses both given and received
With no expectation, ever, of reward
May the world be the better for your having shared in it
May your memory live on for loving and being loved

Man of Kent

I'd be your Super dooper man
Please be my Lois Lane
(Mistake me for a bird, or plane)
I'll do all superhumanly I can
For you again – and yet again.
A bold head on young shoulders
My biceps made for hurling boulders
Consider these astounding thighs
And marvel at their super size
Metropolis's man of steel

Achilles (but with out the heel)
Before me villains scrape and kneel
Arch enemies would not escape
When I'm adorned with pants and cape
Admiring you'd be no decision
Assisted by my x-ray vision

But, really, I'm a clerk from Kent
(Not from another planet –
I went to school in Thanet)
And now my strength is all but spent
Kryptonite's not my undoing
Be mine, oh Lois, please
One glimpse of you has left me rueing
The weakness of my knees

Plane Song

My uncle is a carpenter
who crafts and shapes in wood,
A joiner who enjoys
the smell and strength of
maple or pine or beech,
Creating doors and lintels, beams and tables,
Chairs and planking.
A home stands firm from the tenderness
And skill his hands possess,
Feels furnished with love.

Ah, if I had his hands
these words would not exist.
I would make the things he makes,
Then tend and caress and stroke
My love, in the night, like oak.